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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [PREF](#) [PHUM](#) [QA](#) [SU](#) [LY](#) [CD](#)
SUBJECT: GHAZI VISIT TO CHAD; DEBY-BASSOLE MEETING; DOHA
PLANS

REF: NDJAMENA 429

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SUMMARY

¶1. (SBU) UN/AU Darfur Mediator Djibrill Bassole briefed USG officials October 10 on his meetings earlier in the week with Chadian President Idris Deby Itno, FONMIN Moussa Faki Mahamat, and Sudan rebel leaders from the JEM and various SLA factions. Bassole indicated that Sudanese Presidential Advisor Ghazi Salahuddin was expected in town imminently, and that later on October 10 he (Bassole) would attend a meeting involving Deby, Faki, and Ghazi. In the evening of October 10, S/USSES Adviser Kemi Yai had a conversation with Ghazi, who expressed satisfaction with his meetings with the Chadians, and said that he planned to stay through the following day to continue talks here. END SUMMARY.

BASSOLE'S PERCEPTIONS OF CHAD

¶2. (SBU) Bassole, who arrived in N'Djamena late October 8, told Charge, Pol/Econ Chief, and S/USSES Adviser Kemi Yai that an October 9 audience with President Deby had gone very well. The President, whom Bassole described as cordial and relaxed, expressed skepticism at the likelihood of significantly improved relations with Khartoum in the near term. But Deby also made clear that he was prepared to do his part to try to "warm" the bilateral relationship. Bassole offered that in his own view, the current poor state of relations between Chad and Sudan was poisoning the atmosphere for international Darfur mediations and making dealings with all rebel factions difficult. Bassole stressed that he saw Khartoum's support for Chadian rebel groups as one of the most damaging aspects of current GoS policy. In answer to our comment about Chadian rebel returns having picked up, Bassole said that the GoS would do well to emulate the GoC in encouraging its own rebels to return to Sudan, including by offering compensation. Bassole noted that former Chadian rebel Ahmat Hassaballah Soubiane was expected back in N'Djamena later in the day for discussions with GOC officials. (NOTE: FM Faki told us earlier this week that

Soubiane was due here, but at this writing he has not yet appeared. END NOTE.)

13. (SBU) Charge pointed out that reports of Minni Minawi troops and Chadian rebels gathering on the Sudanese side of the border had provoked the Chadian National Army (ANT) to issue an alert in eastern Chad October 7. Bassole recalled that Minni and the JEM regarded each other as arch-enemies, and suggested that Minni might have had his sights trained on the JEM, not the ANT. Bassole described the ANT as well organized and well equipped, and said that the Chadian rebels would be unwise to attempt military action against N'Djamena anytime soon. He added that the high level of ANT confidence had improved Deby's negotiating position and even presentational aspects of his negotiating style.

GHAZI VISIT

14. (SBU) Bassole told us that he had been invited by the Chadian side to attend a meeting among President Deby, FORMIN Faki, and Sudanese Presidential Advisor Ghazi Salahuddin, who was expected in N'Djamena late in the morning of October 10.

Bassole recalled that this would be the third meeting between the Chadian side and Ghazi, the first having occurred in Tripoli and the second on the margins of the UNGA in New York last month. He said that he believed all the sessions had been cordial. He advised us that Deby had delayed a personal visit to Paris to remain in town for the meeting with Ghazi. (NOTE: We understand that Deby will now leave for Paris October 13. He had originally planned to travel today. END NOTE.)

15. (SBU) Late on October 10, Presidential Envoy Ghazi

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briefed Kemi Yai to his meetings with President Deby, FONMIN Faki and others. Ghazi said he was basically encouraged by the tone of the meetings, and indicated that he would stay an additional day in Chad for follow-on sessions. Ghazi acknowledged that "there was lots of mistrust" between Chad and Sudan, but he expressed willingness to try to build better relations. He characterized Sudan as "the big brother" in the relationship, which meant that Sudan should "make the first move" in improving the situation, by sending an envoy to Chad. Ghazi told Yai that he did not intend to meet with either the SLA reps currently in N'Djamena or with the JEM, because doing so would be "confusing" to his bilateral mission, and he felt that discussions with the rebels should occur in Doha.

JEM, AS EVER

16. (SBU) Bassole indicated that he had spent considerable portions of October 9 with the JEM; in fact, he told us that he would leave our October 10 morning meeting to reconvene with JEM interlocutors. Bassole described the JEM as having had little of a concrete nature to offer thus far, although he did mention that the JEM had said they had a "proposal" for him that they would share before he left. According to Bassole, in his meetings with JEM to date, Khalil and Djibril Ibrahim continued to stick to long-standing positions and to display noteworthy lack of flexibility or negotiating acumen.

JEM leaders remained reticent about whether they would go to Doha, said Bassole, or whether they would be willing to deal with other rebel movements as peers at the negotiating table.

Charge asked Bassole what the JEM appeared to be doing in N'Djamena besides plowing familiar ground with him, and what had brought them here. Bassole offered that Khalil had a house in N'Djamena and relatives in town: "He is just here; he likes it here, he has family business." Bassole continued that Khalil had approached him early in October to say that

he would be in N'Djamena, and to invite him (Bassole) to Chad. After some jockeying, the two had settled on October 8-9 for the timeframe of a meeting. We asked Bassole what sort of dealings he thought the JEM had had with the GoC during the present visit; Bassole said he did not know.

17. (SBU) Bassole characterized the relationship between JEM and the GoC as sinusoidal, adding that he was not sure whether things were up or down at the moment. He described the GoC's attachment to the JEM as a marriage of convenience.

The GoC invested more attention in the JEM when it felt threatened by Sudan, he added. If the GoC's relations with Sudan were to improve as a result of Ghazi's visit or other developments, N'Djamena would lose interest in the JEM, Bassole predicted.

SLA, COMING TOGETHER

18. (SBU) Bassole expressed appreciation for S/USSES Adviser Kemi Yai's efforts to convince various SLA factions -- SLA/Shafi, SLA/Unity, SLA/URF -- to coalesce and prepare for a potential SLA unification conference to be held later this month. (NOTE: We understand that the conference had originally been envisioned for Darfur, but now may be held in Libya, following interventions by SE Gration in Tripoli. END NOTE.) According to Bassole, the SLA players had told him (and also the GoC, with whom they met at Yai's urging) that they were willing to work with each other, that they wanted expanded contacts with UNAMID, and that they sought financial support from the Gabonese, Saudis, Swiss, Kuwaitis and Qataris. Bassole offered that the SLA players had seemed sincere in their desire to maintain the current discussion process.

BASSOLE'S FUTURE PLANS

19. (SBU) Bassole emphasized that as he prepared for an October 28 "Civil Society" conference in Doha, he was making

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an effort to treat the various SLA and other Sudan rebel movements as political groups, not ethnic ones, so as to avoid provoking additional fractures along ethnic lines and to encourage coalition formation. He said that he hoped to use the civil society event to set the stage for efforts in November to get the main belligerents -- the GoS; JEM; and SLA factions (under one banner) -- to sit down together in the aim of signing a peace deal. Diplomatic partners including Chad, Libya, Egypt, and the P-5 would be invited to the session he hoped to hold in November, said Bassole.

WAYS THE USG CAN HELP

110. (SBU) In reply to a question on how the USG could do more to facilitate his efforts, Bassole replied that he hoped the U.S. would put more pressure on the GoS to sever links with Chad rebels, to reduce actions that could be interpreted as support for janjaweed militias, and to take opportunities for bilateral contacts with Chad. He added that the U.S. could also urge Khartoum not to wait for a formal peace accord with its rebels, but to reach out now, in a positive, proactive manner, to rebel groups. Bassole reiterated his appreciation for the U.S.'s taking the initiative to encourage SLA factions to come together. Charge noted that Embassy N'Djamena would continue to do its part to press the GoC to remain open to Khartoum, maintain the moral high ground with respect to military action, and prioritize relations with Sudan over support for the JEM.

COMMENT

¶11. (SBU) Bassole seemed pleased with his meetings with the Chadians, and hopeful that Ghazi's visit would bring further bilateral progress. Ghazi himself also struck us as cautiously upbeat. We will check in with GoC officials next week to seek their perceptions of the Ghazi visit, of the Doha process more generally, and of course to see if they have anything to say about the JEM (or SLA). Embassy stands ready to facilitate S/USSES's efforts to spur greater SLA cohesion and willingness of all players to take part in the upcoming unification conference, Doha events and other relevant activities.

¶12. (SBU) As for the JEM, its goals (and representatives) remain elusive to us. JEM leaders spoke at length with Bassole, but whether they offered anything new remains to be seen. They have had cursory consultations with Embassy staff and with Yai, but have not engaged substantively. We are presently not in a position to confirm any meetings they may have had with the GoC. SLA factions told Yai that they were prepared to meet with JEM reps, but the capture overnight of some SLA/AW fighters by the JEM prompted the SLA to withdraw the offer. The JEM advised Yai that if the SLA were to unite, JEM would have no problem having SLA reps at the table in Doha, but if the SLA remained divided, as they were at present, the "movement's" position vis-a-vis the GoS would remain weak. END COMMENT.

¶13. (U) Minimize considered.
BREMNER